

# a true konfession **I WAS A TEENAGE TERROR**



by m. i. krazee

**T**EENAGERS are little monsters." You've surely heard that, haven't you? Then it should come as no surprise that they've actually made *movies* about us! Why, back in the 1950s, when Elvis was King of Rock-n-Roll (another "monster", according to most adults), my friends the Teenage Werewolf & Teenage Frankenstein were among the most popular of the teenage terrors of that time!

I'll never forget the block-long lines of people waiting

to get in to see the infamous autobiographical celluloid treatment of I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF. (You think the lines are long for the new SUPERMAN? Ha! You should've been there when the TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE landed at Loew's Palace in 1959!)

Why did Horrorwood see fit to make a whole slew of titillating tidbits about teenage terror teams? Don't ask me. All I know is that when the movie moguls decided to put the Teenage Werewolf & Teenage





Bert I. Gordon directs teenage actress June Kennedy in terror scene for **THE SPIDER**



One of the actors behind the alien masks in **INVASION OF THE SAUCERMEN**.

Frankenstein together in one picture, the crowds went wild!

Those were the good old days.

Why, every time you turned around, the local neighborhood theater was playing one of my friends' pix! Let me tell you about it.

### juve in the groove

It all started around 1954 when the American Releasing Corporation (that was the forerunner of today's American-International Pictures) made a movie called **THE FAST & THE FURIOUS**, about teenagers & hot-rods. Of course the teens in that flick were just your ordinary, everyday, leather-jacketed juvenile delinquents; they weren't really "monsters". (Or were they?) Anyway, not long after that, AIP hit on the idea of making pictures about *teenaged* monsters (which rapidly became big bucks-office properties) with *teen-aged* casts (which the teenaged audiences who flocked to see these films could readily identify with).

One of the first films along this line is also one of the famous: **I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF**. Reportedly, this picture caused enormous traffic jams when it played at Drive-Ins across the country during its initial release in 1956. **TEENAGE WEREWOLF** starred Michael Landon as the troubled teenager who *wolfs* down his food. Michael was a normal, down-to-earth high-school roughneck who had a very nasty temper. And it wasn't long before the school board sent him to the mental health clinic whose doctor (played by veteran actor Whit Bissell), unnaturally enough, plans to experiment with young Michael. He injects a serum into the youth's bloodstream which causes a "regression"—and Michael "reverts" to pure bestial form: a werewolf!

The poor boy (a victim of circumstances, you see) couldn't really be held responsible for the murders he committed under the influence of the medically-induced drug; but he was gunned down, just the same, at the film's end.

### franken-teen

After AIP saw the colossal box-office returns of T.W. tail (or tale), they rushed **I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN** (another victim of circumstances) into release in 1957.

This poor fellow had gotten himself involved in a terrible auto accident (which only goes to show: *never* get behind the wheel of a car if you haven't taken a driving instruction course!) and his face...like, *Yeech!* Fortunately (or unfortunately, as the case may be), a doctor was able to fix Frankie up—a bit. (All except his face. His face was still *Yeech!*) And who do you think played the depraved doctor this time? Whit Bissell! Whit proceeded to use Frankie for his own evil purposes. He finally gave the boy a new face but in the shocking conclusion Frankie was electrocuted. And as for Dr. Bissell, well, he fell in with a nasty crowd: a crowd of hungry crocodiles, as a matter of fact!

### youngster monsters

After that AIP teamed up both teenaged monsters and put them in a picture called **HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER** (1958). Actually, this was about the deranged antics of a Hollywood makeup man (played by Robert H. Harris) who gets fired from his job. He recreates two of his most famous "creations"—the Teenage Werewolf & Teenage Frankenstein—and hypnotizes the deadly duo, commanding them to murder





Linda Blair as the Terrified Teenager in **THE EXORCIST**. Note welts on her stomach spelling out **HELP ME!**

the managers who gave him the pink slip! (And if *that* sounds ridiculous, you should see the picture!)

Robert Vaughan, recently seen alongside Christopher Lee in **STARSHIP INVASIONS**, made a movie for AIP in 1958 called **TEENAGE CAVEMAN**. Roger Corman produced the film which, it was revealed, actually was supposed to have taken place *after* the awful aftermath of World War 3. A very interesting idea and very appropriate for the paranoid population of the mid-50s, which was frantic for building backyard bomb shelters because of the seemingly-impending "Red Death" (and I don't mean the kind Eddie Poe penned).

### the deadly dolls

In retrospect it seems that the teenaged monsters in American-International's movies were more victimized than the persons they themselves menaced. Continuing this tradition, AIP went on to produce **ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE** in 1958. This story centered around the device of a puppet master (John Hoyt) which could miniaturize people, reducing them to a mere 6". Veteran actor John Agar (small but wiry) finally sets up Hoyt's machinery to work in reverse and re-enlarges himself to normal size. He saves his friends and everyone goes home happy—except John Hoyt, who goes off to prison.

**THE SPIDER** (or, as it is sometimes known, **EARTH VS. THE SPIDER**) was about—no, not a teenaged spider, silly!—a bunch of teenagers who come



A Schlock or Gillette-tine razor blade could have saved this **TEENAGE MONSTER's** life.





When you go around in the wrong circles it can lead to dark circles under your eyes as Sandra Harrison learned to her surprise in **BLOOD OF DRACULA**. (AIP 1957.)

across a gigantic spider in a remote hillside cave in sunny California. The carnivorous creature is caught, killed and displayed at a high school gymnasium. But the authorities who thought they killed the monster soon discover that the creeping menace is not dead. Quite a number of houses, cars & people are squished under the hairy legs of the ten-ton creature before it returns to the cave and is electrocuted by an unusually fast-thinking police force.

### **draculna**

A year before, in 1957, AIP had delved into the realm of teenaged *female* fiends with their **BLOOD OF DRACULA** starring Sandra Harrison. Ms. Harrison was, not surprisingly, another victim of circumstances, a la the Teenage Werewolf & Frankenstein. As a troublesome female, she is sent away to a girls' boarding school where, it is hoped, she will learn the meaning of the word "discipline". Instead, the wicked principal of the establishment (also female) hypnotizes Sandra and reverts her mind back to its basic animalistic nature—sort of a female version of **I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF** except that in Sandra's case she is turned into a bushy-browed vampire.

### **unidentified flying ogres**

As if they hadn't already contributed enough to the field, AIP also released **INVASION OF THE SAUCER-MEN** in 1957. **SAUCERMEN** was a light-hearted comedy, a spoof of all that had gone before. From out of space comes a shimmering blue starship filled with ugly green BEMs who possess hypodermic-like fingernails filled with alcohol. The teenage cast of this picture spent most of their time in "Lover's Lane" but the bulbous-headed aliens did manage to instill profound states of drunkenness in at least half the cast before someone realized the beings were allergic to bright lights.

### **dragula?**

1959 saw the final 2 teenage-terror pix from AIP, both again spoofs. The first was **THE GHOST OF DRAGSTRIP HOLLOW**. At a haunted house party a group of teenagers is menaced by the "ghost"—which isn't a ghost at all but just a regular old guy having a little fun. Weird fun but fun nonetheless. (The monster costume for this film was a re-vamped version

of the outfit worn for AIP's **SHE-CREATURE** of 1956.)

**A BUCKET OF BLOOD** was American-International's final foray into teenaged horror. Directed by Roger Corman, the film is one of Corman's best & most famous features.

### **house of whacks**

**BUCKET OF BLOOD**, starring Dick Miller as the would-be sculptor Walter Paisley, is full of hard-hitting black humor. The scene is a smoke-filled coffee house frequented by a band of beatniks. Walter Paisley is the resident busyboy, a real schmuck who very much wants to become an artist, like his beatnik friends. Unfortunately, Walter has no talent for using his hands, except for one thing—murder! Corman takes the story one step beyond **HOUSE OF WAX** when he has Walter accidentally stab his pet cat and cover the furry body over with plaster, later presenting it to his associates as an "original" piece of sculpture. Thereafter, Walter deliberately commits murder and covers the bodies in plaster in order to secure his new-found fame & prestige as a great sculptor.

Before long Walter's handiwork is uncovered and he hangs himself. One of the beatniks comments: "It's his best work."

During the late 1950s, when AIP's teenage terror films were "hot" properties, other film companies quickly jumped on the juvenile bandwagon.

### **a meatier monster**

**TEENAGE MONSTER** was a Howco International release of 1957. You've probably seen it on TV under the title **METEOR MONSTER**. In this film, a strange, radioactive meteorite (or *is* it a meteorite?) bathes a young boy in an eerie glow of unearthly light. He grows up to be just what the title indicates. (It's hard to tell this with a straight face but I'll try.) Tall, covered with bristly hair, possessing a row of discolored, decayed teeth, little more than an imbecile, the youth is hidden from the watchful eye of society by his mother. Imbecilic tho he is, the creature does learn the difference between a man & a woman; too bad he can't tell the difference between a man & a monster! He kidnaps a young woman and makes his way to the hills, where he is promptly found & shot.

Warner Bros. added one picture to the genre in 1958: **TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE**. From beyond the stars one lone teenage alien is transported to Earth to pave the way for his race's imminent invasion. But, being a typical teenager, even if of unearthly origin, he falls in love with a teenage Earth-girl and sacrifices himself when he subsequently directs his cohorts' "invisible" starships into the side of a large hill and everything goes *splat*.

### **zom of these daze**

**TEENAGE ZOMBIES** was the title of a Herman Cohen production. The zombies in this film are created synthetically by a crazy gal who lives on a remote Pacific island. A group of adventure-minded teenagers sets sail for the island and wind up becoming the title of this 1958 release.

In 1965 Bert I. Gordon filmed **VILLAGE OF THE GIANTS**, a not-too-faithful version of HG Wells' *The Food of the Gods*. (Gordon remade another version in 1975, again not-too-faithfully.) Wells' remarkable story of a "food" which accelerates growth in living organisms was interwoven into a tale of teenage trouble-





**The Ghost of the She-Creature rises in the GHOST OF DRAGSTRIP HOLLOW.**



**Robert H. Harris and his teenage lycanthorpe Gary Clarke in HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER.**



**Young Lovers in the Teenage Tale whose Title was longer than the Movie: THE INCREDIBLY STRANGE CREATURES WHO STOPPED LIVING AND BECAME MIXED-UP ZOMBIES.**





Gary Conway (left) is taken for a ride by Whit Bissell--or is it just the other way around? From **I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN**, AIP 1957.

makers who ingest the food and grow into an army of giants—then they get into really BIG trouble!

### **zom mix**

**THE INCREDIBLY STRANGE CREATURES WHO STOPPED LIVING AND BECAME MIXED-UP ZOMBIES** is the incredible title of an independent production from Fairway Films. Altho the title wouldn't indicate it, this is a rather simple story of a weird hypnotist who transforms a rather moronic beatnik into a rather moronic murderer.

For nearly 10 yrs after that film (perhaps *because* of that film!) not a single teenaged monster made its motion picture debut.

An era had died.

(The public rejoiced.)

Then suddenly, in 1973, a film about the hellish, demoniacal possession of a 13-year-old girl appeared on the scream scene:

**THE EXORCIST**, starring Linda Blair!

And that, I believe, is recent enough for you to remember, especially if you read about it in **FAMOUS MONSTERS** issues 111 & 120.

What can we expect in the future from motion picture companies whose only criteria for film production rests with the whims of our culture's youth?

Is **THE OMEN** an omen of things to come?

There's no telling.

We've already had stories about murderous pre-teens (**THE BAD SEED**). And stories about radioactive, half-extraterrestrial, half-human children (**VILLAGE & CHILDREN OF THE DAMNED**). Why, we've even had stories about monstrous mutated babies (**IT'S ALIVE & IT LIVES AGAIN!**)

And that's about as Young as you can get, Robert!

**END**



The makeup artist goes berserk and makes himself up as a fiend in **HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER.**